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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 006007

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [TH](#)

SUBJECT: THAI ELECTION BODY GRAPPLES WITH FRAUD, ARMY  
INTERFERENCE

REF: A. BANGKOK 5914 (DISQUALIFICATIONS)

- [1](#)B. BANGKOK 5881 (OATHS AND INSULTS)
- [1](#)C. BANGKOK 5740 (CANDIDATE REGISTRATION)
- [1](#)D. BANGKOK 5600 (MILITARY INTERFERENCE)
- [1](#)E. BANGKOK 5578 (ELECTION SEASON)

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission James F. Entwistle, reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (SBU) On November 25 and 27, candidates competing under the pro-Thaksin People's Power Party (PPP) banner in the northern city of Chiang Rai accused the security forces of raiding homes in the area to intimidate PPP candidates and voters; however, provincial officials denied the raids were politically motivated. Although the police claimed a leaked internal poll predicting a PPP plurality in the upcoming December 23 election was merely an "assessment," an Election Commission of Thailand (ECT) official called for a ban on polling by government agencies. In addition to reports of progress on 41 ECT malfeasance investigations, the press reported that an ECT panel, which had been investigating an alleged military plan to subvert the PPP's election prospects, narrowly concluded that the army "interfered" in politics; this led Prime Minister Surayud to state publicly he might remove Deputy PM Sonthi Boonyaratglin from a position giving him a role in election issues. A record four-fold increase in the number of registered absentee voters could impact closely contested races. End summary.

POLITICAL PARTY ALLEGES MILITARY HARASSMENT

[1](#)2. (SBU) Since November 25, the press have reported on a series of alleged police and army raids in areas loyal to the pro-Thaksin People's Power Party (PPP) in the northern province of Chiang Rai. On November 25, the sister of PPP deputy leader and Chiang Rai favorite son Yongyuth Tiypairath complained to the media that 100 members of the security forces intimidated PPP supporters by invading homes in the district. On November 27, PPP candidates in Chiang Rai complained that the security forces raided seven

additional areas in the city in order to "harass" PPP candidates.

13. (C) On November 25, Yongyuth accused army generals working with the Council for National Security (CNS) of masterminding the raids. On November 27, PPP candidate Samart Kaewmeechai told the media that police raided the home of his assistant in order to "bully" him. In response, CNS General Somjet Boonthanom called Yongyuth a "street dog" who was alleging military abuses to garner public sympathy ahead of the December 23 elections. Royal Thai Army Supreme Commander Boonsrang Niampradit called on Yongyuth to provide evidence to support his allegations. On November 26, the Chiang Rai police commander told the press that the raids were intended to "search for and arrest illegal immigrants from Burma," rather than intimidate politicians. (Comment: We will follow-up to try to clarify exactly what happened, but this is clearly a serious allegation and the government response so far is not convincing. End comment.)

#### POLICE ELECTION "POLL" STIRS CONTROVERSY

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14. (SBU) A leaked Police Special Branch analysis released to the public on November 26 predicted that the PPP would win 219 seats in the new parliament, while the competing Democrat, Chart Thai, and Motherland parties would win 121, 57, and 40 seats respectively. Police officials later claimed that these numbers were merely a "general assessment" rather than based on scientific polling. The leak has generated substantial controversy over the appropriateness of pre-election polls sponsored by government agencies, especially as news of the police poll emerged shortly after the leak of a similar, allegedly Army-sponsored opinion poll

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that also predicted a PPP election victory (reftel A). On November 28, an Election Commission of Thailand (ECT) official announced that the ECT will consider a pre-election ban of government-sponsored opinion polling.

#### ECT PANEL: MILITARY "INTERFERED" IN POLITICS

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15. (U) On November 28, an ECT panel concluded an investigation into PPP leader Samak Sundaravej's claim that certain CNS documents provide evidence of an effort by the military to subvert the PPP (ref D). According to press reports, a narrow majority on the investigative committee believed the military intended to "interfere in politics," although the panel members were unable to conclude if the documents in question were legitimate. The press quoted unnamed sources as saying the ECT would likely defer to the Constitutional Court to determine the documents' authenticity. Sources also said any decision to punish military officials involved in drafting the documents would also be up to the court. On November 29, Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont said he would remove retired General and Deputy Prime Minister Sonthi Boonyaratglin from the leadership of a prominent counter-vote buying committee (ref E) if the ECT were to recommend his dismissal.

16. (U) On November 27 an ECT official announced the agency would investigate 41 complaints of election law violations, out of a total of 136 complaints the agency had received. The ECT official added that 61 of these complaints concerned vote-buying allegations, predominantly from the greater Bangkok metropolitan area. On November 25, an ECT Commissioner also said that the ECT would shortly announce the result of its investigation into allegations that a Nakhon Ratchasima PPP candidate allegedly gave money to voters by pinning bank notes on election calendars.

#### RECORD NUMBER OF ABSENTEE VOTERS

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¶17. (SBU) On November 23, a Ministry of Interior official told us that 1.9 million voters (approximately 4.2% of the Thai electorate) had registered for advance and absentee voting for the upcoming elections, representing a nearly four-fold increase from the most recent election in 2006. The official indicated that almost 60% of these voters registered from Bangkok and nearby provinces. The capital hosts a large migrant worker population from provinces in Thailand's Northeast "Isaan" region. Many constituencies in this voter-rich area are hotly contested, and it is conceivable that these absentee votes could influence the outcome of some races.

¶18. (SBU) The vast majority of absentee voters will cast their ballots in advance at polling stations nationwide on December 15 and 16. (Approximately 79,000 Thai expatriates have reportedly registered to cast votes overseas in Thai diplomatic missions.) Ballots cast in advance will then be transported to relevant polling stations throughout the country prior to December 23 and will be counted with other ballots cast on election day. An ECT official told us on November 23 that the ECT has devised a plan to efficiently distribute absentee ballots prior to election day.

¶19. (SBU) Comment: On the one hand, the increase in absentee voters is a positive sign of interest in the election. On the other hand, the large number of absentee ballots presents possible opportunities for fraud. We will continue to monitor this issue closely and encourage Thai NGOs monitoring the election to remain alert to potential absentee ballot fraud. End comment.  
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